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Election Address for the General Synod Election - 2021

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I am pleased and honoured to have been your General Synod representative for the past 6 years, having engaged and prayerfully carried out my duties. I now seek your support in continuing and completing those many ongoing and soon to be arising issues of the next General Synod.

Profile

- I served in the army for over 30 years as a mechanical engineer, senior planner and 'company secretary' in various field units and major headquarters. I rose through the ranks to retire as a lieutenant colonel. On retirement I ran my own successful business for 6 years.
- I have lived in Wiltshire for 35 years. My first wife died and now I am very happily married to Gwen, who also lost her spouse. Both my first and present wife were/are lay preachers in the Church of England and Methodist Church respectively. I have 2 daughters and 2 beautiful granddaughters. Gwen has brought to our marriage 2 children and 4 more lovely grandchildren.
- Being active individuals we now make regular long walks for example, The Camino de Santiago and regularly use the gym. Our joy is our garden which, as you might imagine, is full of colour, well-tended and productive.
- By nature I become involved and committed, being project driven and ensuring that goals are achieved.

Called to... background and the Now

- Christ called me thirty years ago and, after at first resisting, I realised that Jesus is Lord. I have ever since grown in my involvement and activity in support of His church.
- I consider being a member of the PCC essential for General Synod members, so as to be truly grounded and constantly reminded of what the church is for and about. As a member for many years, and having been the lead for several major build/refurbishment projects, I have helped to greatly enhance our church's worship facilities and outreach capabilities.
- I became a Street Pastor over 12 years ago when I realised that churches rarely are able to reach and communicate with the vast majority of the 18-30 year age group. At weekends, between 10:00 PM and 03:30 AM, we often talk with lonely and hurt individuals and regularly talk with groups of curious youngsters who want to know why we give up our time to be with them and often help them on 'their streets'. We tell them of God's love, that God loves them, and that this is a practical way of sharing God with others. The youngsters have a strong respect for those who go out to meet them, and be part of their night. "You're the only God people I know", some will say.
- I am a national trainer for the Ascension Trust, the umbrella organisation for the Street Pastor movement.

- Community engagement is important. Therefore, for many months I have been a volunteer at the local Covid vaccination centre regularly assisting and helping in a practical way.
- I have had a successful career in the highest level of management (e. g. £2bn annual spend organisation), experienced life in many places & circumstances and had insight into many differing organisations. This has proven very useful in understanding the charged, highly political sphere that is the working of the General Synod assembly.
- I have spoken at synods in many debates seeking understanding & clarity; supporting or rebutting proposals; and, at times, offering an alternative perspective.
- Worshipping in different Anglican churches and with other denominations, widens one's perspective of our ecumenical Christian faith. Jesus founded His church; man made many. There is always warmth and fellowship when you visit other churches whether they are firmly catholic, evangelical, liberal and/or inclusive in nature and style. Jesus is still Lord.
- I remain part of the wider, still extant, 'Vacancy in See' committee as the process proceeds to select our new bishop in the autumn.

Called for...

I will briefly mention just three of the important issues directly related to the next General Synod:

- The church as a whole has had a significant reduction in its income and will continue to do so into the future. This is readily evidenced locally and in the papers and comments emanating from the Church Commissioners and General & Diocesan Synods. I am especially keen to continue to follow through, at all levels, with this issue. I lead the sub-committee at deanery, engaging with the availability of resources. Resources, at all levels, do not seem have the high profile of 'mission and evangelism' but it is the detailed and practical work of leadership and management so necessary in our Church.
- The Archbishop of York is leading on the proposal to create '10-20,000 new churches' across the country; with new people and majoring on lay leadership and meeting in homes. Many see this as an opportunity to extend the parish model, whilst others view it as a 'threat' to the parish tradition. It needs further, closer and continuous engagement; asking questions; challenging and seeking clarification as the church moves forward.
- The overriding issue early in the next General Synod is Living in Love and Faith (LLF). Our Salisbury Diocese has a tradition of liberal interpretation of the Christian faith. Many would-be synod representatives already have quite firm pro or con positions. I am not one of these. Though, I note that exclusion has no part of Jesus' message: all are welcome. I speak with many church-goers and also with the youngsters who have such different world views to mine and, I suspect, most of you reading this script. After closely engaging, debating and discussing this topic for 6 years now, I want to see it through. For, clearly, it is the major and immediate issue facing us; schism must be avoided (Ephesians 2, v14).

I have a realistic perspective and ambition for our Church. It is now coupled with a maturing understanding of how it operates. Please, support me to be your representative for the next General Synod by giving me your first preference vote.

Keith Leslie